

# The era of Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha, 1805–1848\*

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The period of Muhammad ‘Ali’s reign, which started in 1805 when he was appointed by the Ottoman sultan as *wali* of Egypt and ended in 1848 with his deposition as a result of mental illness, offers one of the most interesting epochs of modern Egyptian history. During this period Egypt, while still forming a part of the Ottoman empire, assumed an increasingly independent stance, and was finally granted as a hereditary domain to Muhammad ‘Ali by the sultan ‘Abd al-Majid in 1841. The Pasha, as Muhammad ‘Ali came to be known in Egypt (or the Viceroy, as he was commonly known to Europeans), managed in a long and effective reign to bring to an end Mamluk power in Egypt and to create in its stead a loyal elite composed of members of his own family, of friends and acquaintances from his home town of Kavalla, and of members of the expanding bureaucracy that he founded in Egypt. Moved by a desire to turn his tenure as governor into a more secure and permanent position, Muhammad ‘Ali undertook various radical measures that changed Egypt’s position within the Ottoman empire, strengthened its economic ties with Europe at the expense of older links with other provinces of the empire, and radically changed its social and cultural map. Most significantly, by creating a massive naval and military force, the Pasha was able to expand Cairo’s control not only over the entire province of Egypt, but also much beyond the traditional borders of the province to include the Sudan, Crete, the Morea, the Hijaz, Yemen, Syria, and even parts of Anatolia, the heartland of the Ottoman empire. In short, Muhammad ‘Ali had succeeded in reaping the considerable potential wealth of Egypt, in organizing its internal administration, and then in using this accumulated wealth and better organization to transform Cairo and its environs from a mere provincial capital within the Ottoman empire into the center of an expansive “empire” ruled by the Pasha and his elite. Not for nothing has

\* Regarding transliteration of Turkish names, see Note on transliteration, p. xiii.

the beginning of “modern” Egyptian history been taken to coincide with the inauguration of the Pasha’s reign, and has he been called the “founder of Modern Egypt.”<sup>1</sup>

### *Rise and consolidation of power, 1801–13*

The period that followed the French evacuation of Egypt in 1801 witnessed a complete breakdown of law and order. Men accused of collaborating with the occupation force and women suspected of consorting with French soldiers were lynched. The multiplicity of military forces in the provinces and the absence of effective control by the governor in Cairo allowed soldiers of various factions to disobey orders with impunity. In the cities soldiers forced merchants to lend them money, bought goods with counterfeit coins, attacked merchants, artisans, and their customers, and harassed women, children, and old men. The situation in the countryside was not much better, if not considerably worse. Peasants were repeatedly attacked by soldiers who had not been paid for months and who descended on villages to demand their delayed salaries; rural trade was badly affected when Nile boats were seized by warring factions. The situation was worsened when the Bedouin took sides with one or another warring faction.<sup>2</sup>

These conditions of insecurity reflected the precarious political situation in Egypt in the aftermath of the French occupation. This occupation, although brief, had seriously weakened the power of the Mamluks in a manner that led to a power vacuum after the departure of the French army. Napoleon had inflicted heavy defeats on the two leaders of the Mamluk warriors on the eve of the French occupation, Murad Bey and Ibrahim Bey, the former in the battle of Imbaba (commonly known as the battle of the Pyramids) outside Cairo on July 21, 1798, after which he fled to Upper Egypt, and the latter at Salihyya in the east of the Delta on August 11, forcing him to flee to Syria. Determined to circumvent the power of the Mamluks altogether the French had excluded them from the various *diwans* formed to help rule the country and to which they appointed only members of the ‘ulama’. Furthermore, the French army had relentlessly pursued both Murad Bey in Upper Egypt and Ibrahim Bey in Syria, but had stopped short of dealing a death blow to either amir.

This failure was not from lack of determination but because of the activities of another European power that would come to play an increas-

<sup>1</sup> Henry Dodwell, *The Founder of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge, 1931); Guy Fargette, *Mehemet Ali: Le fondateur de l’Egypte moderne* (Paris, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> See ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, *‘Aja’ib al-athar fi’l-tarajim wa’l-akhbar*, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1880), III, 189ff., esp. 192–93 for attacks on “collaborators,” 190 for soldiers engaging in trade, 199 for soldiers’ attacks on markets, and 237 for breakdown in security in the countryside.

ingly important role in Egypt: Great Britain. While Napoleon was driving Murad out of the Sa'id, news arrived of the disastrous loss of his fleet in Abuqir bay to the east of Alexandria at the hands of Nelson (August 1, 1798). This forced him to rush north, thus giving Murad much-needed time to regroup his forces. The following spring Napoleon decided to deal with the threat in Syria of Ibrahim Bey, who had been given refuge by Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar of Acre. At the head of the *armée d'orient* he marched into Syria before they could muster their forces or receive further assistance from Istanbul. Again the British inadvertently came to the assistance of the Mamluks when Sir Sydney Smith managed to capture Napoleon's siege artillery, forcing the French to lift the siege of the formidable fortress of Acre in the spring of 1799. Thus at two crucial moments when the very existence of the Mamluk duumvirs was threatened, British intervention saved them, while frustrating French designs for establishing a permanent foothold in the eastern Mediterranean.

If the British were unintentionally kind to the Mamluks and their leaders, the plague, which took a heavy toll in the French camp at Acre and proved equally effective in forcing Napoleon to lift the siege of the city, was not: Murad Bey succumbed to it in 1801. After departure of the French from Egypt in 1801 his rival, Ibrahim Bey, now old, weak, and defeated, returned from Syria but was so feeble that leadership of the Mamluks was usurped by two amirs from Murad's household, 'Uthman Bardisi Bey and Muhammad Alfi Bey. Instead of collaborating to repair the damage caused by the French, they continued the rivalry of their predecessors; the severe blow the Mamluks suffered during the brief French occupation went unattended owing to the continued divisiveness of their new leaders, their lack of insight, and their tragic failure to learn from past mistakes.

With the French gone, the situation was opportune for the Ottoman sultan to fill the vacuum, reestablish effective control in Egypt, and deal decisively with the remaining Mamluk menace. Even before the French occupation the authorities in Istanbul had considered a military expedition to Egypt to snatch the province from the Mamluks and bring it back within the Ottoman fold. One such expedition was dispatched in 1785 but was soon recalled owing to the Ottomans' own military weakness. After the French conquest of Egypt, however, the situation was so alarming that the sultan dispatched troops to Egypt with the explicit mission not only of evicting the French but also of ending the Mamluk menace. With these objectives the grand vizier, Yusuf Ziya Pasha, at the head of 7,000 troops, left Syria and arrived in Cairo in June 1801.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Mamluks' position was now weaker than ever, three factors prevented the sultan from accomplishing his aims. The first was the British, who once again came to the assistance of the Mamluks – literally saving their lives more than once after their leaders had

been rounded up by the Ottoman troops and put on ships for Istanbul to meet their fate.<sup>3</sup> The second factor was the Janissary troops the grand vizier had with him, which the British described as a “medieval horde” completely lacking in discipline, training, or even cleanliness; it soon became obvious that Ottoman troops would not be effective in reestablishing Istanbul’s control.<sup>4</sup> The third, and most important factor, however, that hindered the Ottomans was the force they sent by sea to Alexandria to assist the grand vizier and the British in their joint efforts against the French. Paradoxically this was a well-trained body of troops commanded by Kuchuk Husayn Pasha, grand admiral of the Ottoman navy since 1792, when the sultan had appointed him because of his commitment to naval and military reform. He and his deputy and protégé, Muhammad Khusrav Pasha, had a force of some 4,000 troops, 1,200 of them trained and disciplined along modern lines and with German officers.<sup>5</sup> These were some of the earliest of the famous *al-nizam al-jadid* (Turkish *nizam-i cedit*) recently formed by Sultan Salim, which would later prove decisive in the history of the sultan and his empire.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of these obvious advantages, this force too was unable to reestablish the sultan’s authority in Egypt, for together with its disciplined, well-trained troops it included a small Albanian contingent known throughout the empire for their fierce, rebellious behavior. It was this small force that Muhammad ‘Ali, initially its second-in-command, used to establish his own control at the expense of the Ottoman sultan and which enabled him to usher in an increasingly independent rule that lasted for over forty years.

That this was possible owed less to Muhammad ‘Ali’s shrewdness than to the political and military situation in Egypt in the wake of the French evacuation in the summer of 1801. The Mamluks were exhausted after three years of harassment by the French and denial of access to their prized lands in the provinces (especially in the Delta) and their homes, families, and treasure in Cairo. The British, with the strongest naval force in the eastern Mediterranean, although crucially important in evicting the French from Egypt, were not prepared to occupy the province without the consent of the

<sup>3</sup> See *ibid.*, III, 201–02 (for events of Jumadi al-Thani 1216), and William Wittman, *Travels in Turkey, Asia-Minor, Syria, and Egypt, 1801* (London, 1803), 381, 383.

<sup>4</sup> For a description of the force see Piers Macksey, *British Victory in Egypt, 1801: The End of Napoleon’s Conquest* (London and New York, 1995), 21–22, 24–26, 178–79; Wittman, *Travels*, 230–37.

<sup>5</sup> Macksey, *British Victory*, 155; Thomas Walsh, *Journal of the Late Campaign in Egypt* (London, 1803), 108, 111.

<sup>6</sup> Stanford J. Shaw, *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789–1807* (Cambridge, MA, 1971), 135. For a contemporary description of the troops see Mustafa Rashid Celebi Efendi, “An explanation of the Nizam-y-Gedid,” in William Wilkinson, *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* (London, 1820), 251–52.

Ottoman sultan; by the treaty of Amiens (March 1802) the British acknowledged the sultan's sovereignty over Egypt, and accordingly evacuated their troops from Egypt in the following year. The struggle for power was, therefore, practically limited to the Mamluks, who were desperate to restore their privileged position, the Albanian forces who, while small in number, were effective fighters, and who, more importantly, were famous for independence and insubordination,<sup>7</sup> and finally the Ottoman Janissary and *nizami* forces under the command of the grand vizier.

Shortly after the departure of the French the grand vizier returned to Istanbul, to be followed by the grand admiral, leaving Khusrav as the senior Ottoman official in Egypt. The sultan was quick to appoint him as *wali* in recognition of his efforts in fighting the French. As champion of military reform Khusrav set out to train some Mamluk soldiers along French lines after enlisting in his service French officers who had stayed behind when their army had left Egypt. He also raised a Sudanese regiment and trained it in the French style, even tailoring for them "tight" French uniforms, made it a private escort guard for himself, and appointed an officer to "teach them the positions of the French."<sup>8</sup> He did not have enough time to see the result of his military experiment, for soon afterward (April 1803) the Albanian troops, living up to their rowdy and rebellious reputation, mutinied over delayed pay. Khusrav, unable to control the situation in Cairo, fled to Damietta leaving it to the head of the Albanian troops, a certain Tahir Pasha, to deal with the insurrection.

Matters continued to deteriorate, however, and in the event Tahir himself was assassinated, leaving Muhammad 'Ali as commander of the Albanian force. Rather than rush to Khusrav's rescue he, now in charge of the most powerful military force in Egypt, realized that there was a golden opportunity to fill the fateful vacuum of power himself; he forged a coalition between his Albanian troops and the Mamluks under Bardisi Bey to fetch Khusrav from Damietta as a prisoner and then to deport him to Istanbul. The Porte quickly appointed another *wali* who was uninformed about the situation in Egypt and who was eventually put to death in 1804 by the same coalition of Mamluks and Albanians. Muhammad 'Ali then turned against the Mamluks, playing on their age-old divisiveness and the rivalry between Alfi Bey and Bardisi Bey. In doing so he was assisted by the leading 'ulama', merchants, and notables (*ashraf*) of Cairo who had been complaining of the high taxes the Mamluks were levying to pay their soldiers and placate the Albanian troops. In the meantime (1804–05) the Porte appointed yet another *wali*, Khurshid, who, while determined to rule and return some law

<sup>7</sup> For this reputation among contemporary military observers see Wittman, *Travels*, 237–39.

<sup>8</sup> Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib*, III, 222 (events of Muharram 1217).

and order to Cairo, eventually proved himself so hateful to the Cairene population as well as to the Mamluks and Albanian troops that he practically lost control of the city to Muhammad 'Ali. The notables and 'ulama' finally threw their weight behind Muhammad 'Ali, proclaiming him *wali* and imploring him not to raise taxes. When news of this reached Istanbul the Porte realized that Muhammad 'Ali was in control in Cairo, and the sultan finally acquiesced in his appointment as *wali* of Egypt in July 1805.

In this manner Muhammad 'Ali found himself at the age of thirty-five in control of Egypt, one of the wealthiest provinces of the Ottoman empire. He knew, however, how precarious his position was. For one thing his appointment had been forced on Salim, and he was wary that the sultan might try to depose him at the first opportunity. This concern haunted Muhammad 'Ali throughout his long career, and Egypt's history in the first half of the nineteenth century was considerably shaped by his attempt to make his tenure more secure and permanent. Second, the Albanian troops that brought him to power and continued to form the military base of his strength were unreliable: the soldiers were rebellious and untrustworthy and could turn against him as they had against their former commander. Third, the Mamluks had still not been dealt a death blow; they posed a serious threat to public security in the countryside and to Muhammad 'Ali's safety. Fourth, he in fact controlled no more than Cairo itself, which had witnessed a "revolutionary moment" as a result of a coalition of 'ulama', artisans, and *ashraf* that had brought him to power and forced the sultan to bend, but which could prove dangerous if it were not defused quickly.

The first thing he did after his appointment as governor was to calm the situation in Cairo. He thus broke the revolutionary coalition that had brought him to power and ordered the merchants to reopen their shops, much to the delight of the Cairenes who were tired after months of disruption in the city. Through a series of maneuvers he then undermined the leadership of the *ashraf* represented in the person of 'Umar Makram who had been instrumental in the crucial months of 1805. He used the same tactics of forging alliances and breaking them with the Mamluks, although their final hour had not yet come.

The most important threat, however, came from Istanbul and from the sultan's grudging acceptance of Muhammad 'Ali as *wali* of Egypt. Anxious to remove him, Salim ordered Muhammad 'Ali to dispatch a force to deal with the rising power of the Wahhabis in Arabia. Immediately after the Wahhabis had captured the holy cities of Mecca (1803) and Medina (1804) and disrupted the annual pilgrimage (thus delivering a severe blow to his reputation as Defender of the Two Holy Shrines) Salim told his governors in Syria, Egypt, and Iraq to deal with this menace, but none of them had the will or the means to undertake the required military expedition against

them. After the appointment of Muhammad 'Ali as governor of Egypt Salim repeated the order in the hope that Muhammad 'Ali would get entangled in a military campaign that would weaken him and help in dislodging him from Egypt. The Pasha was aware of the Porte's motives and was reluctant to meet the sultan's request, arguing that his military forces were not ready and that he was busy fighting the Mamluks.<sup>9</sup>

Only a year after instating him in Egypt the sultan attempted to remove Muhammad 'Ali from Egypt in a more direct manner. This time he was tempted with another province, Salonika. In June 1806 Musa Pasha, *wali* of Salonika, was in fact sent to Egypt to fulfill the sultan's edict of trading places with Muhammad 'Ali. On his arrival, however, Musa found that Muhammad 'Ali had much stronger support than the sultan had thought and the Ottoman commanders sent with him were convinced that the force at their disposal was inadequate to dislodge Muhammad 'Ali from his important province.<sup>10</sup>

The following year, 1807, proved crucial in entrenching Muhammad 'Ali in Egypt. The year opened with the death of Alfi Bey on January 29, soon after that of the other leader of the Mamluks, Bardisi Bey, who had died on November 12, 1806. The Mamluk factions were thus deprived of leadership and left vulnerable to Muhammad 'Ali's intrigues. In March the Pasha managed to overcome another hurdle. The British, in their continuing war with Napoleonic France, feared that the French were contemplating reoccupying Egypt; a British force landed at Alexandria and, finding it devoid of grain, proceeded to Rosetta which was reputed to have large granaries. Although Muhammad 'Ali was fighting the Mamluks in Upper Egypt, the British still failed to capture Rosetta and later agreed to evacuate the country. In May Sultan Salim was himself deposed after failing to curb the power of the Janissaries in Istanbul, and his successor, Sultan Mahmud II, found himself with little room for maneuver. Muhammad 'Ali was therefore spared further requests to take action in Arabia.

To secure his position further in Egypt Muhammad 'Ali invited his family and friends to Egypt to take up residence. First to arrive were members of his immediate family, who were given posts; his son Ibrahim, then only sixteen years old, was immediately made governor of the Citadel in Cairo. This set a trend that was soon characteristic of the Pasha's long reign: members of his immediate family, relatives from his home town of Kavalla, and close and trusted friends were given important positions in the administration that he started to build.

<sup>9</sup> J. B. Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1795–1880* (Oxford, 1968), 105; Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 296–98.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib*, IV, 9–20 (events of Rabi' al-Thani 1221); Georges Douin (ed.), *L'Angleterre et l'Égypte* (Cairo, 1928–30, II, *La politique mameluke, 1803–1807* (1930), 275, 291, 295; Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 290–91.

After taking this step toward creating a loyal elite, Muhammad 'Ali started to spread his control over wider areas of Egypt. The British evacuation of Alexandria (September 1807) after their abortive attempt to establish a foothold there gave the Pasha the chance to occupy that city and replace the Ottoman governor with a friend, Boghus Yusufian, who would later become the Pasha's adviser on foreign and commercial affairs. This was followed by small campaigns in the Delta to evict the Mamluks and push them to Upper Egypt. Throughout the following two years the Mamluks were practically given the Sa'idi to govern in exchange for remitting its taxes to Muhammad 'Ali. Finally, in 1810, after dividing their ranks and after they failed to pay overdue taxes, he marched southward and snatched from them one after another of the Sa'idi provinces; by the end of the year he had taken control of all Egypt. The Mamluk leaders found no option but to accept the Pasha's invitation to reside in Cairo, where by offering them some of their former palaces to live in he kept them under his watchful eye.

Having strengthened his position against potential enemies the Pasha tried to conciliate the sultan in Istanbul. Besides continuing the age-old traditions of minting only Ottoman coins in Egypt, using the sultan's name in Friday prayers, and sending the annual tribute required of him, the Pasha did his best to show the new sultan that he was indeed the humble servant that a *wali* of an Ottoman province was expected to be. Thus he dispatched the much-delayed force to Arabia, a step he took as much to send his quarrelsome troops away from Egypt as to enhance his position in the empire by showing the sultan that he, unlike other *walis*, could be relied upon. In March 1811 he held a big ceremony at his residence in the Citadel to announce the official start of the campaign. At this ceremony, to which were invited members of the 'ulama', dignitaries, and above all, the Mamluk chieftains, it was announced that his son Tusun had been named by the sultan as leader of the campaign and would be given the title pasha of Jidda.

That day, March 1, 1811, proved to be the last of Mamluk power in Egypt, for the Pasha seized the opportunity of their grand and festive assemblage to deal a final death blow to them. On their way up to the Citadel in their colorful embroidered caftans they were trapped in a narrow alley where the Pasha's troops opened fire from every side. Over four hundred and fifty amirs were killed in this single incident, which was followed by a ferocious campaign against those who had succeeded in escaping. The Pasha's Albanian troops were unleashed against the Mamluks' houses in Cairo, plundering their property and raping the women. In the end, about a thousand Mamluk amirs and soldiers died in Cairo alone during the few days that followed the massacre in the Citadel.<sup>11</sup> A year later a military expedition under Ibrahim Pasha was dispatched to Upper Egypt

<sup>11</sup> Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib*, IV, 127–32 (events of Safar 1226).



against the Mamluks who had succeeded in evading the massacre in Cairo; another thousand were said to have been killed.<sup>12</sup> This was no small feat, for in this infamous massacre and its aftermath Muhammad 'Ali accomplished what the Ottoman sultans had been trying to do for centuries without much success – the end of the Mamluk presence in Egypt.

Equally important in strengthening his position in Egypt during this initial stage of Muhammad 'Ali's rule was the commercial opportunity afforded by the departure of the British from Alexandria. Given the havoc caused by the Napoleonic wars in Europe British forces in Malta and Spain needed grain, which was in short supply in Europe. The Pasha stepped in swiftly and supplied them with food collected in the Delta. Having established control over Alexandria, Muhammad 'Ali imposed a monopoly over the export of grain and reaped considerable profit.<sup>13</sup> This would prove to be an important and essential characteristic of his regime: establishing his control over the production of agricultural commodities and over their internal as well as external trade. For the time being, though, he proceeded slowly and cautiously, governed as ever by the prospect of lucrative trade with Europe; his previous residence in Albania and earlier vocation there as a merchant made him keenly aware that prospects were even brighter as a result of the continuing Napoleonic wars.

Muhammad 'Ali's next step was to control the agricultural system with the intention of maximizing profits from it. The fact that the land-tenure system, the system of collecting taxes from the countryside, and the manner of running the entire agricultural economy were inefficient and corrupt was realized by the French as soon as they landed in Egypt. Napoleon convened a *diwan* to discuss the issue; high on the agenda was the question of whether to replace the existing tax-farming system, the *iltizam*, with a system of direct taxation. The *multazims*, tax-farmers, it was believed, were inefficient, seldom having precise information about the lands from which they were to collect taxes, and were also corrupt, often pocketing more money (*fa'idh*) from their *iltizams* than they actually remitted to the *wali* in Cairo. In addition, and in compensation for their services, they were given land free of taxes (*aradi al-usya*). The *diwan* that Napoleon convened recommended abolition of the *iltizam* system and registration of the names of actual landowners. These recommendations would be repeated two years later, after Napoleon's departure, by General Menou, who envisaged an increase in revenue by replacing all land taxes with a single tax, the rate of which would vary according to the quality of land. Menou also recommended imposing a tax on the *usya* land held previously by *multazims*, taxing *waqf*

<sup>12</sup> Public Record Office, London: FO 24/4, letter to Misset, May 6, 1813, quoted in Dodwell, *The Founder*, 35–36.

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth M. Cuno, *The Pasha's Peasants: Land, Society, and Economy in Lower Egypt, 1740–1858* (Cambridge, 1992), 104.

and *rizqa* lands that had been endowed for religious purposes, and allowing the fallahin, who up to that time had only usufruct over lands they tilled, to acquire them as private property.<sup>14</sup>

The French, however, had no chance to put these recommendations into practice. Following his assumption of power in Egypt, Muhammad 'Ali started to implement them in small steps. (The one recommendation he was adamant in opposing, however, was that of legally recognizing the fallahin's land [their *athar* as it was called] as private property. If he had believed that private ownership of land would not harm the "state" and its interests, he told a French visitor in 1833, he would have respected it as much as he respected private rights in urban property.)<sup>15</sup> In 1806 the Pasha started his gradual march toward establishing absolute control over the countryside by ordering the *multazims* to remit to him half of the *fa'idh* that they were collecting. The following year he canceled the tax exemptions of village shaykhs, the *masmuh al-mashayikh*, and in September of the same year inaugurated what would later prove to be a ferocious attack on the power and privileges of the religious shaykhs by canceling their exemption as *multazims* from half the *fa'idh*. Later, in 1808, when there were low floods and many villages proved incapable of paying taxes, he snatched some 160 villages from their *multazims*. These were allocated to members of his family and the gradually expanding elite, who were ordered to make sure that the normal level of cultivation was maintained despite the low Nile. In 1809 he started targeting *rizqa* lands, that is tax-free lands that were endowed for religious purposes, mostly for the upkeep of mosques and *madrasas*. In June he ordered all beneficiaries of *rizqas* as well as holders of *usya* land to present title deeds within forty days – those who failed to do so had their lands confiscated. These repeated attacks on the privileges of religious men triggered their revolt in July 1809, under 'Umar Makram, the *naqib al-ashraf*, who had been instrumental in bringing Muhammad 'Ali to power four years earlier. After repeated gatherings, petitions, and demonstrations, the revolt failed and Makram was exiled to Damietta. He would not be allowed to return to Cairo until ten years later, when his popularity and influence with the population were all but forgotten. Leaderless and hopelessly divided over their stance toward the Pasha, the 'ulama' were incapable of stopping Muhammad 'Ali from imposing taxes on land they held as *multazims*.

Having curtailed the economic power of the 'ulama' Muhammad 'Ali then turned against the Mamluks and confiscated their wealth. Following the massacre of March 1811 it was only natural for the Pasha to expropriate all

<sup>14</sup> Helen B. Rivlin, *The Agricultural Policy of Muhammad Ali in Egypt* (Cambridge, MA, 1961), 42–46.

<sup>15</sup> Georges Douin (ed.), *La mission du Baron de Boislecomte, L'Egypte et la Syrie en 1833* (Cairo, 1927), 80.

the *iltizams* the Mamluks had held. When Ibrahim was sent at the head of a military force to expel them from the Sa'id in the following summer he cleared the countryside and took the opportunity to seize all *rizqa* lands in Upper Egypt, triggering yet another series of complaints by the 'ulama' that went completely unheeded by him and his father. By 1811 Muhammad 'Ali had finally succeeded in establishing himself as uncontested ruler of Egypt, not only by getting rid of his political rivals, but also by extending his control over the actual cultivators of land, the main producers of wealth, and by getting rid of the various intermediaries who stood between the state and the *fallah*, be they Mamluk amirs, *multazims*, village shaykhs or religious scholars. This allowed the Pasha to amass a considerable fortune; between 1805 and 1812 Muhammad 'Ali increased his annual revenue nearly threefold<sup>16</sup> – the five-year period 1806–11 was also one of highly profitable trade with Europe.

This favorable situation altered after 1812 when, following Napoleon's disastrous Russian campaign and the opening of the Black Sea, resumption of British trade lowered demand for Egyptian grain. At the same time the military expedition he had sent to Arabia soon sucked him into a quagmire that put considerable strain on his finances, from which the indecisive leadership of Tusun did not help to extricate him.

Faced by these pressures on his finances, the Pasha felt the need to raise more revenue from the countryside and in 1813 he ordered a general survey of agricultural land throughout Egypt. This survey, begun in the spring of 1813 in Middle and Upper Egypt and completed in May 1814 in Lower Egypt, was extremely detailed and thorough, and proved to be instrumental in increasing the Pasha's revenue. With this cadaster in hand the Pasha and his officials succeeded in capturing more land from the *multazims* and reclassifying much of their *usya* land as *miri*, that is taxable land, by seizing land for which *multazims* could not produce title deeds, and by using a smaller measuring unit than was usual. And while the distinction between *rizqa* and *miri* lands was maintained, they were subjected to the same tax rate. In this manner the power of the *multazims* was even more severely curtailed and Muhammad 'Ali managed to extend control over the countryside, to raise revenue by subjecting hitherto tax-free lands to taxes, and to interfere as never before in the actual process of agricultural production.

The effect of all these policies, which were dictated above all by the Pasha's determination to entrench himself more securely in Egypt, was deeply felt by villagers and town dwellers alike. The fallahin's lives were gradually encroached upon by the new bureaucracy that the Pasha was founding in Cairo and with which he intended to replace the old *multazims*. Armed with the new cadaster, his officials assessed higher and higher taxes, while at the same

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

time paying little attention to the peasants' grievances or financial difficulties. The fallahin also suffered from the monopolies the Pasha introduced and from the more frequent demands of corvée that the Pasha's agricultural projects required. Reflecting the fallahin's realization that they were no longer controlled by the *multazims* but that Muhammad 'Ali now controlled their lives and livelihood was their response to some old *multazims*' demands by saying, "Your days are finished and we have become the Pasha's peasants."<sup>17</sup>

Townspeople also suffered heavily from the Pasha's policies in the first phase of his long reign. Specifically, urban notables, be they 'ulama', *ashraf*, or leading merchants, found their positions undermined by the Pasha's economic moves. The 'ulama', whose livelihood rested on their ability to extract a surplus in the form of fees for supervising *waqf* lands, or retaining a *fa'idh* from their *iltizams*, were hit hard by the Pasha's new system of direct taxation and his control of *waqfs*. The *ashraf*, for their part, were severely affected by the loss of their leader, 'Umar Makram, and found themselves defenseless in dealing with the Pasha's officials. Finally, the urban merchants were affected by the Pasha's new arrangements, chief among which was expansion of monopolies to include more and more commodities.

### *Preparing for military expansion, 1813–29*

Having taken effective control of the entire province of Egypt and inaugurated the process of replacing the old Mamluk military oligarchy with trusted retainers, Muhammad 'Ali was still bothered by the unresolved tension between him and his sovereign. The campaign that he launched against the Wahhabis to restore the authority of the sultan in the Hijaz came to no rapid conclusion, and after initial successes it became clear that Tusun's command was costing the campaign dearly; after capturing Mecca and Medina (January–February 1813) his army soon suffered serious setbacks. This prompted Muhammad 'Ali to go to the Hijaz in person (August 1813) and eventually to appoint his eldest son, Ibrahim, as commander there. Nevertheless, and despite these problems, the Pasha believed that capturing the two holy cities provided enough evidence of his effort in defending the sultan's authority against the "infidel" Wahhabis. He thus sent one of his *mamluks*, a certain Latif Agha, to Istanbul to present the keys of both cities to the sultan as a sign of obedience and submission. During his stay in Istanbul, however, Latif Agha was given the title of pasha and encouraged to rebel against his master in Egypt. On his return to Cairo rumors circulated that he had come back with a *firman* to depose Muhammad 'Ali and replace him as *wali* of Egypt. Although the Pasha, in Arabia, was informed of the conspiracy in time, he could not rush back

<sup>17</sup> Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib*, IV, 207, quoted in Cuno, *The Pasha's Peasants*, 5.

owing to pressing military matters there, and it was left to his trusted deputy, Muhammad Lazughlu, to take personal revenge against Latif and have him beheaded at the foot of the Citadel.<sup>18</sup>

Although the Pasha succeeded in surviving this "palace coup," he knew only too well that his position in Egypt was still insecure in spite of already impressive accomplishments. Crucially lacking was a body of troops reliable and disciplined enough to confront any serious military threat from the sultan in case the latter tried to take Egypt from him. After receiving the alarming news of Napoleon's return from exile in Elba and the possibility of renewed conflict in Europe, Muhammad 'Ali hurried back to Egypt. There his hold on the Albanian troops was precarious, for besides their rowdy nature they had been hard hit by his recent reforms in the agricultural sector; a large number had acquired *iltizams*, and Ibrahim's attacks on the privileges of the *multazims* had severely affected them. Matters were made worse when a number of these Albanians came back with him from Arabia and, finding their *iltizams* practically unprofitable, started asking for long-delayed arrears in their pay. Soon after his own return to Egypt (June 1815), therefore, the Pasha decided to impose order on the troops by force, and "to put their pay and expenses under an organized principle (*'rabita ve nizam*')."<sup>19</sup> Influenced by Khusrav's earlier experiment in attempting to introduce the *nizam al-jadid* in Egypt, the Pasha thought he could now have his much-needed military force: he gathered his Albanian soldiers in Maydan al-Rumayla at the foot of the Citadel for target practice, and for over three hours the soldiers fired their guns in "successive volleys making a thundery noise like the French." The following day it was rumored that the Pasha wanted to have a count of the soldiers and "to train them according to *al-nizam al-jadid*, copying the positions of the French. He wanted them to put on tight clothes and to change their appearance."<sup>20</sup>

The attempt failed miserably, for the soldiers reluctantly complied with the Pasha's orders on the first day only to conspire to kill him on the following night. The Pasha was informed of the plot in time to escape assassination. When they knew that their conspiracy was foiled, the rebels went on a rampage in the streets of Cairo, looting and damaging a considerable amount of property. Muhammad 'Ali was able to pacify the merchants and the populace only by returning the stolen property or compensating them for the damages.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib*, IV, 181–83 (events of Dhu al-Hijja 1228); Sir John G. Wilkinson, *Modern Egypt and Thebes*, 2 vols. (London, 1843), II, 534. Cf. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Rafi'i, *Asr Muhammad 'Ali* (Cairo, 1989), 138–40.

<sup>19</sup> Dar al-Watha'iq al-Qawmiyya, Cairo (hereafter DWQ), Bahr Barra 4/149, 30 Ramadan 1230/September 5, 1815.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib*, IV, 222 (events of Sha'ban 1230).

<sup>21</sup> DWQ, Dhawat 1/76, 1 Ramadan 1230/August 7, 1815; al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib*, IV, 223–25;

Although the Pasha managed to meet this further challenge to his authority, he became more than ever aware of his need for a reliable, well-trained body of troops. For the time being, though, he turned his attention toward more reforms in the agricultural sector and initiated an ambitious and partly successful public-works program. This involved mainly irrigation projects such as digging new canals that together more than doubled the length of irrigation canals in Egypt,<sup>22</sup> cleaning these and other canals regularly from the alluvial mud that deposited as a result of the annual floods, and increasing the depth of canals in such a way as to allow the waters of the Nile to irrigate lands not adjacent to the river in times of low water. That in turn allowed perennial irrigation of huge tracts of land, especially in Lower Egypt where, eventually, the basin systems of irrigation all but disappeared. All in all, and as a result of these efforts, the area of cultivated land increased between 1813 and the 1830s by around 18 percent;<sup>23</sup> the area of cropped land was increased considerably by converting more land to perennial irrigation and planting more than one crop each year.<sup>24</sup>

Chief among these grand schemes was the re-digging of the ancient canal that linked Alexandria to the Nile, a project the Pasha started in April 1817 and that was eventually called Mahmudiyya, in honor of Sultan Mahmud II. Work lasted for three years (it was finished in early 1820) and provided Alexandria with a regular supply of fresh water, improved communication with the hinterland, and allowed reclamation of thousands of faddans along the canal's banks. The ambitious project involved coercing thousands of men and women from all the provinces of Lower Egypt to work on it. During the month of March 1819 alone the number of laborers was said to have been as high as 300,000. Upon completion the canal was 72 kilometers long and had cost 35,000 purses (around 7.5m francs).<sup>25</sup>

The Mahmudiyya canal exemplifies the degree to which the Pasha had managed to secure control of Egypt and testifies to his ability to undertake infrastructural projects on a scale that none of the Ottoman governors before him had managed to achieve. The project also shows the price paid by the Egyptian population (in this case mostly peasants from Lower Egypt) in fulfilling the Pasha's grand schemes; some contemporary reports put the casualty figures as high as 100,000! Most of the men, women, and children

Felix Mengin, *Histoire de l'Égypte sous le gouvernement de Mohammed-Aly*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1823), II, 49–50; J. J. Halls, *The Life and Correspondence of Henry Salt*, 2 vols. (London, 1834), I, 445.

<sup>22</sup> It is estimated that 686 of the 1,200 miles of canals in Egypt during Muhammad 'Ali's reign were created through his initiatives (Rivlin, *The Agricultural Policy*, 248).

<sup>23</sup> Cuno, *The Pasha's Peasants*, 115.

<sup>24</sup> Rivlin, *The Agricultural Policy*, 270.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 216–21.

who perished in the corvée died as a result of the poor methods with which the canal was excavated.<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile Ibrahim had managed to capture Dar'iyya, capital of the Wahhabis (September 1818), and as a further sign of loyalty to the sultan Muhammad 'Ali chose to send 'Abdallah ibn Sa'ud, the Sa'udi leader, to Istanbul (where he was beheaded) rather than have him punished in Cairo. After spreading his control to Arabia, albeit in the sultan's name, Muhammad 'Ali decided to expand southward, to the Sudan, where the sultan was known only by name. Although the Pasha told Istanbul that his aim was to capture the last of the Mamluk amirs who had taken refuge there, his letters to his son Isma'il Pasha, who headed the campaign, leave no doubt that his main object was to capture as many slaves as possible. He repeatedly wrote to Isma'il that he should not be distracted by raising taxes and searching for gold from this purpose there. "The value of slaves who prove to be suitable for our services," he wrote, "is more precious than jewels . . . hence I am ordering you to collect 5,000 of these slaves."<sup>27</sup> With these men Muhammad 'Ali hoped to form a modern, disciplined army, the army he desperately needed to confront any possible threat to his position from Istanbul. We have already seen his attempt to train the Albanian troops along modern lines, and how this failed. Still uncomfortable with the idea of conscripting Egyptians, the Pasha resorted to the Sudanese to supply him with much-needed manpower.

In 1820 two expeditions were dispatched to Dongola and Kurdufan, one under Isma'il Pasha, the other under Muhammad 'Ali's son-in-law, Muhammad Bey the *daftardar*. The total force numbered 4,000 troops and was composed of a mosaic of ethnic and linguistic groups: Albanians, *mamluks*, Maghribis, and Egyptian Bedouin.<sup>28</sup> The expedition proved disastrous. For one thing it was dispatched without any accompanying medical services, and the troops soon fell victim to all kinds of diseases; in September 1821 alone, the number of dead reached 600, only to rise to 1,500 the following month. As a result the Albanian troops in Isma'il's company started to grumble and asked to be sent back to Egypt's more temperate climate. Moreover, Isma'il was inexperienced, indecisive, stubborn, and failed to inspire the troops, who deserted him in a steady stream. His brutality, rashness, and impetuous nature eventually cost him his own life. Moreover, owing to the haphazard way in which the campaign was conducted, there was a heavy toll on Sudanese civilians. The lack of effective means of transportation resulted in

<sup>26</sup> See *ibid.*, 221, 353 n. 15; al-Jabarti, 'Aja'ib, IV, 301–04; Cf. Cuno, *The Pasha's Peasants*, 122–22.

<sup>27</sup> DWQ, s/1/50/2/340 on 19 Dhu al-Qi'da/August 8, 1822. See also s/1/50/4/195 on 19 Muharram 1239/September 26, 1823.

<sup>28</sup> See al-Rafi'i's different estimate, *Asr Muhammad 'Ali*, 160.

the deaths of thousands of slaves before they even reached Egypt. Still more staggering is the fact that of 20,000 slaves who did in fact reach Aswan, by 1824 only 3,000 remained alive. The others perished “like sheep with the rot.”<sup>29</sup>

Finally, having lost his own son in the campaign, and failed to raise the men required for his new army, Muhammad ‘Ali realized that the Sudan campaign had been a complete failure. When he was informed that a large number of Turkish-speaking officers were about to desert the campaign and return en masse to Egypt he wrote to the governor of one of the Sa‘idi provinces: “Since the Turks are members of our race and since they must be spared the trouble of being sent to remote and dangerous areas, it has become necessary to conscript around 4,000 men from Upper Egypt [to replace them].” These troops, he explained, would be drafted for three years, after which they would be given stamped certificates and allowed to return to their villages.<sup>30</sup>

This was the nucleus from which Muhammad ‘Ali’s army would expand in little over ten years to the impressive figure of 130,000 troops. For the time being, though, these first conscripts were sent to training-camps in Aswan and Farshut in Upper Egypt, where an officer corps was also being formed from *mamluks* belonging to the Pasha and to members of his family, chief among whom was his son Ibrahim. While the training of the soldiers was entrusted to the Pasha’s loyal deputy and friend, Muhammad Lazughlu, the officers were trained by a group of French officers, many of whom had earlier served in Napoleon’s army and needed employment after demobilization. Chief among these was a certain officer named Seves who claimed to have been a colonel in Napoleon’s army and to have been present at Waterloo, and whom the French consul-general in Egypt, Drovetti, introduced to the Pasha. Seves would eventually convert to Islam, assume the Muslim name of Sulayman Agha and rise in the military hierarchy to acquire the title of pasha and be second only to Ibrahim Pasha. The French influence on the Pasha’s new army may be further discerned in the arrival in 1825 of a French military mission to restructure the officer corps.

The Ottoman model was not far from the Pasha’s mind, however, when he planned his new army. For soon after commanding Seves and Muhammad Lazughlu to attend to their business, he explicitly ordered Ibrahim Pasha to adopt the structure that Sultan Salim III had used in his own army more than twenty years earlier. “Although the plan that Sulayman Agha had put down is a wonderful one,” he explained to his son, “it is similar to the one Napoleon had used to lead an army composed of several thousand

<sup>29</sup> Dodwell, *The Founder*, 64–65.

<sup>30</sup> DWQ, s/1/50/2/145 on 25 Jumadi al-Awwal 1237/February 18, 1822.



troops. Our army, however, is a new and much smaller one and we have only recently begun to create it.”<sup>31</sup>

Both Muhammad 'Ali and Ibrahim had practical minds and they found no problem in adopting the Ottoman model to fit their new army while at the same time borrowing from the French the idea of conscripting and arming the peasants. Unlike the French army, however, Muhammad 'Ali's new army would be ethnically divided: while Arabic-speaking peasants formed the bulk of the soldiery and were gathered from the villages along the Nile by force, their commanders were Turkish speaking, and strict orders were issued to prevent Arabic-speaking peasants from rising beyond the rank of *yuzbashi* (captain). This ethnic and linguistic duality was characteristic of Muhammad 'Ali's reign: senior positions in the civilian bureaucracy as well as in the army were reserved for Turkish speakers, while lower ranks both in the military and civilian bureaucracies were filled by Arabic speakers, whose ethnicity and language guaranteed that they remained in the lower ranks.

This system had two aims. First, it was intended to attract men from all over the Ottoman world to come and serve Muhammad 'Ali and his expanding household. Through these positions and others in the rapidly expanding civilian bureaucracy a loyal elite was forming around the Pasha and his family. Second, the system aimed to deny the Arabic-speaking masses the leaders needed to challenge the Pasha's rule.

The need to keep the peasants, by far the overwhelming majority of the Arabic-speaking masses, in submission was crucial. In addition to the danger posed to agricultural production by moving thousands of men, conscripting the peasantry was an unprecedented step whose danger lay in arming them at the very time that resentment of the government's harsh policies was most acute. By the 1820s the Pasha had extended his monopolies to include most of the major staple foodstuffs and many other cash crops that the fallahin's livelihood depended on. As a result, the peasants were often forced to grow crops sold only to government warehouses and at prices fixed by the Pasha. They then had to buy back what they had grown themselves, and at prices considerably higher than the original sale prices. Violations of these rules were met with extreme severity. In addition, and in order to undertake his numerous and ambitious public works, the Pasha had wider recourse to *corvée* than had the *multazims* before him. Peasants were not only forced to work without pay on various public works for longer and longer periods every year, but they were also forced to do so on projects outside their villages and even outside their provinces. As if this were not enough, to finance his various projects the Pasha had increased land tax to the degree

<sup>31</sup> DWQ, s/1/50/2/209 on 18 Rajab 1237/April 11, 1822.

that it may safely be said that by the 1820s the countryside had reached the limit of its ability to meet the Pasha's insatiable needs.

As a result of deeply felt resentment of the Pasha and his policies the countryside would not withstand another burden. The decision to conscript the fallahin had repercussions that posed a serious threat to Muhammad 'Ali's authority. Immediately after conscription was introduced in Lower Egypt in 1823 a big revolt erupted in the province of Minuffiya in the Delta and the Pasha had to go there in person, guarded by his own palace troops and assisted by six field cannons, to subdue the revolt. The following year an even larger rebellion broke out in Upper Egypt and was soon joined by over 30,000 men and women. Looting, arson, and attacks on local officials were reported to the Pasha in Cairo who decided to deal with the rebellion by sending his new troops to quell the alarming revolt. This was a serious gamble indeed, for the troops were sent to the very provinces from which they themselves had been conscripted.

The gamble succeeded. One of the new regiments marched into the center of the revolt in Qina, and quelled the rising in two weeks, killing 4,000 people in the process. The new troops had two other chances to prove themselves to the Pasha. A contingent of 2,500 had been sent to the Hijaz to deal with renewed trouble there and managed to inflict a decisive defeat on a Wahhabi force ten times its size. A short while later, on March 24, 1824, a huge explosion in a powder magazine at the Citadel in Cairo killed over four thousand people. Rumors circulated that the explosion was the work of old Albanian troops disgruntled by the Pasha's creation of the new *nizami* troops. This incident posed a grave danger to the Pasha, whose position was compared to that of Sultan Salim when he had attempted to get rid of the Janissaries seventeen years earlier. A single battalion of the new troops, however, rushed to the scene and quickly brought the situation under control.

These repeated tests, successfully passed, delighted Muhammad 'Ali and set his bureaucratic machinery to conscript more and more fallahin. Waves of conscription followed each other in a swift, frenzied succession with no clear criteria to determine whom to conscript and whom to leave behind. In the absence of medical screening a large number of men who were rounded up had to be returned home after they were deemed unfit for military service.

By subjecting young, reluctant conscripts to strict military training, the Pasha managed finally to create a body of disciplined, reliable troops that he used to extend Cairo's control over the entire province of Egypt in a manner that had not been witnessed for centuries. Moreover, he used these troops to spread his influence over the Sudan in a way that the earlier expedition had failed to do; the Sudan became a colony. Muhammad 'Ali also employed

them to establish a more permanent presence in Arabia and to extend his influence to the Yemen, where in 1819 he signed a treaty with the imam that ensured his effective control of the Red Sea.

From Istanbul, sultan Mahmud looked with envy and unease upon his *wali*'s accomplishments in Egypt. And while the Pasha tried to placate him by sending the annual tribute, by using his name in the Friday prayer, by minting coins bearing his name, and by naming the newly dug Mahmudiyya canal after him, the sultan was not fooled. For what Muhammad 'Ali had managed to do was to create within the Ottoman empire a vibrant alternative to Istanbul, the old capital that was stagnant with age-old traditions and political intrigues. Cairo still managed a far smaller proportion of the potential surplus of the Ottoman economy than Istanbul controlled, but it did so under Muhammad 'Ali in an increasingly effective way.

Most alarming for the sultan was the new army that his *wali* in Egypt had created, for this had been done while Mahmud still had his own hands tied by the Janissaries and while the empire was facing yet another military challenge from within. In 1821 a widespread revolt had broken out among the Greeks of the Morea. The revolt soon spread to the Aegean islands, and the European powers pressed the sultan to grant the Greeks their independence. The sultan rejected intervention in the internal affairs of his empire and determined to suppress the revolt. Khusrav Pasha, Muhammad 'Ali's old rival, was made grand admiral of the Ottoman navy and set about cutting the lines of communication of the Greek rebels. In desperation, and to divert the resources of his increasingly powerful *wali*, the sultan ordered Muhammad 'Ali to send troops to assist him in subduing the Greeks.

The Pasha received Mahmud's order with unease, for although he had earlier helped the sultan in Arabia it was obvious that the Greek conflict presented a much more complicated situation. Transporting the troops would require hiring or buying ships that would cost him dearly and put considerable strain on an already tight budget. In the event the Pasha acquired a fleet so large that he boasted that none had been seen like it in Muslim waters before. Another reason for the Pasha's apprehension was the realization that, unlike in the Arabian campaign, the European powers had high stakes in Greece, where they were using the sultan's Christian subjects to interfere in the empire's internal affairs.

In spite of his unease, Muhammad 'Ali had to comply with the sultan's order and only five months after receiving it he dispatched 17,000 newly trained and disciplined troops, with their food and equipment, on their first assignment. Heading the force was Ibrahim Pasha, who would prove himself as capable of leading modern troops as he had been eight years earlier in leading an Albanian and *mamluk* rabble in Arabia. Immediately after starting operations against the Greeks Ibrahim and his new regiments

"caused as much alarm by defeating the Greeks as the Sultan had done by failing to do so,"<sup>32</sup> and his efforts were crowned in June 1827 when he took Athens. For some time, though, problems had mounted between Ibrahim and Khusrav, who was managing naval operations. Owing to the old rivalry between the two Ibrahim believed that Khusrav was not doing his best to assist his land operations. On his part Khusrav complained that Muhammad 'Ali was late in refitting and supplying the imperial fleet which had been sent to Alexandria for that purpose. Muhammad 'Ali would not tolerate such accusations and started, in turn, to ask for Khusrav's dismissal and for Ibrahim to be given a free hand in conducting the war. He threatened that unless Khusrav was dismissed he would order Ibrahim to withdraw and leave the incapable forces of the sultan to finish the war. Fifteen days after receiving this ultimatum the Porte acceded to Muhammad 'Ali's demands, and Khusrav was relieved of his post in February 1827.

During the previous year there had been serious signs that the more-or-less amicable relations between sultan and *wali* were nearing an end. When Mahmud succeeded in suppressing the Janissaries in June 1826 in what became known as the Auspicious Event, he summoned Muhammad 'Ali's agent in Istanbul, Muhammad Najib Effendi, and asked him to write to his lord in Cairo to request help in founding the sultan's new *nizami* army. He explained that it was because of Muhammad 'Ali, after all, "that we came to realize the importance of training the troops along modern lines."<sup>33</sup> Although the sultan gave Muhammad 'Ali credit for initiating such important reforms, the Pasha refused to help the sultan, but offered excuses: the officers in his army were better paid than their counterparts in the sultan's army, he said, and if some were sent to Istanbul the sultan's officers might get jealous and create serious friction.<sup>34</sup> The most he would do was send a letter to the grand vizier congratulating him on the bold move.<sup>35</sup>

Whether or not Muhammad 'Ali was already contemplating the likelihood of fighting the sultan's forces at some time in the future cannot be ascertained, although no evidence rules out this possibility. What is clear is that from this time onward a latent and mutual suspicion became more and more manifest. When the sultan appealed to his *wali* to help him face Russian military advances in Moldavia, the Caucasus, and eastern Anatolia, the Pasha refused unless the sultan granted him a governorship in Anatolia in return,<sup>36</sup> a request he well knew would not be granted.

What turned the Pasha so decisively against the sultan was the European

<sup>32</sup> H. W. V. Temperley, *England and the Near East: The Crimea* (London, 1964), 53.

<sup>33</sup> DWQ, Bahr Barra 10/123 on 25 Dhu al-Qi'da 1241/July 2, 1826.

<sup>34</sup> Ahmed Lutfi Efendi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, 8 vols. (Istanbul, 1873), I, 96.

<sup>35</sup> DWQ, s/150/6/402 on 16 Dhu al-Hijja 1241/July 22, 1826.

<sup>36</sup> Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Shaw, *The History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, II: *Reform, Revolution and Republic, 1808-1975* (Cambridge, 1977), 31.

intervention which Muhammad 'Ali watched with increasing unease but Mahmud and his advisors characteristically dismissed as a bluff intended to intimidate them. When Ibrahim reported anxiety about the presence of a combined French–British–Russian fleet so close to the Egyptian–Turkish one in Navarino bay, the grand vizier urged him not to “take heed of the noise and clamour that the Europeans are making,” and assured him that “victory does not depend on the number of ships but on the strength and conviction of men’s hearts.” He advised Ibrahim to ignore the feeble threats the European powers had issued to the “formidable Ottoman State.”<sup>37</sup>

For their part, neither Muhammad 'Ali nor his son could dismiss the combined European fleet so easily. Before the fateful battle of Navarino (October 20, 1827) in which he lost his own beloved fleet, Muhammad 'Ali wrote to his agent in Istanbul a frank and rather desperate letter anticipating the disaster and saying that he was neither prepared nor willing to confront the European powers. He urged Najib Effendi to convince officials in Istanbul to accept in principle Greek independence and to seek Austrian mediation to achieve it. Convinced that the Europeans were not bluffing, he said:

We have to realize that we cannot stand in front of them, and the only possible outcome [if we do] will be sinking the entire fleet and causing the death of up to thirty or forty thousand men ... Taking the responsibility of wasting [such numbers] is no easy task. I have, therefore, stopped sending letters to my son urging him to fight on. Wars are not won only by depending on God and trusting Him, but also by putting all possible human effort into it. [It is true, he added, that] God has ordered us in His Book to stand up to the enemy and to spare no effort in confronting him. This, however, necessitates a thorough knowledge of the art of war. Unfortunately, my dear friend, although we are men of war ... the Europeans are way ahead of us and have already put their theories of war into practice. [Then seeing that there was no way out but to grant the Greeks their independence, he added] Here I am at a loss: shall I grieve at the calamity of the Ottoman State or at my own lost effort. I am most sorrowful and anguished.<sup>38</sup>

On October 20, 1827, in less than three hours, the entire Ottoman fleet and most of the Egyptian one were either sunk or burnt in Navarino bay. This disaster, both Ibrahim and his father believed, was not the result of negligence or misconduct on their part but of the obstinate and arrogant refusal of the Porte to accept European mediation over Greek independence. Nor did this intransigent position change after Navarino: the Porte refused any suggestion by Ibrahim that he withdraw his troops to Egypt, and instead kept issuing unrealistic orders for campaigns against the Christian population and, if need be, to burn all villages on his way.<sup>39</sup> Muhammad 'Ali

<sup>37</sup> DWQ, Bahr Barra 12/15, on 6 Rabi' al-Thani 1243/October 28, 1827.

<sup>38</sup> DWQ, Bahr Barra 12/7, on 14 Rabi' al-Awwal 1243/October 6, 1827.

<sup>39</sup> DWQ, Bahr Barra 12/18, on 17 Rabi' al-Thani 1243/November 10, 1827.

refused these stubborn and unreasonable demands, and proceeded to sign a treaty with the Powers guaranteeing the safety of his son's withdrawal from the Greek mainland. To reward him for his considerable efforts in subduing the Greek revolt the sultan nonetheless gave Muhammad 'Ali the island of Crete to govern, a prize he considered unsatisfactory since it was already in his possession; Furthermore, Crete had been in a constant state of rebellion since the start of the Greek revolt. From this time onward Muhammad 'Ali resolved not to get involved in the sultan's adventures, and he set out to repair the damage he had suffered in this costly debacle.

The Greek campaign made obvious to the Pasha the serious deficiencies of his new troops. Although his soldiers were well trained and reliable, the same could not be said of their officers, many of whom had no previous military experience and had flocked to the Pasha's service for nothing more than the handsome pay he offered. In an attempt to improve the quality of his officers Muhammad 'Ali now accepted the advice of General Boyer (who had arrived in the country in 1824 at the head of a French military mission) and opened a staff college in October 1825 under another French officer, Jules Planat.<sup>40</sup> The lack of a well-trained cavalry had been immediately apparent to Ibrahim when he witnessed the superb performance of the French cavalry under General Maison in the Morea. After his return to Egypt he convinced his father to open a cavalry school and to create at once seven cavalry regiments. The Pasha set out with characteristic diligence to demand 2,500 horses from members of his household and his retainers; animals were imported from Syria or fetched from the Sudan. In due time the cavalry school was opened at Giza under yet another French officer, Noel Varin. To complement the work of this school a veterinary school and hospital were soon opened at Rosetta under Pierre Hamont.<sup>41</sup>

Most impressive, however, of the institutions the Pasha set out to create after the Greek debacle were the arsenal works of Alexandria and the new medical school at Abu Za'bal near Cairo. Following the destruction of his fleet at Navarino bay the Pasha was determined to acquire a new fleet, this time not by buying ships from foreigners but by building them in Egypt. With that purpose in mind he secured the services of a French engineer, de Cerisy, who started constructing an arsenal at Alexandria in June 1829. Besides building for the Pasha a magnificent fleet, the *liman* of Alexandria, as the arsenal came to be known, was also an infamous prison to which thousands of men and women were sent for hard labor. According to various decrees and laws of the Pasha, the *liman* was one of two places within his dominions designated as places of exile for serious and dangerous

<sup>40</sup> Planat published his impressions of the Pasha and his policies in a work considered a good source for the subject, *Histoire de la régénération de l'Égypte* (Paris, 1830).

<sup>41</sup> Hamont, unlike Planat, offers a very critical account of the Pasha's policies and of Clot's work especially: *L'Égypte sous Mehemet-Ali*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1843).

criminals, the second being Fazughli in the Sudan.<sup>42</sup> At one point the number of those interned in the *liman* was as high as six thousand.<sup>43</sup> So deep was the impression made by this prison that the word "*liman*," which in Turkish means nothing more than a port or harbor, came to be synonymous with "prison." It retains this meaning in Egyptian Arabic.<sup>44</sup>

The other important institution established in the wake of the Greek debacle was the Abu Za'bal hospital, founded in 1827. This was intended mainly to care for the needs of officers and soldiers of the nearby training-camp of Jihad Abad at Khanqah to the north of Cairo. The hospital was part of a large and ambitious project to meet the medical needs that had become apparent in the Sudan campaign and, to a lesser extent, in the Greek campaign. (Abu Za'bal was founded in the same year as another hospital, the Mahmudiyya in Alexandria, which was to treat sailors and marines as well as inmates of the *liman*.) Abu Za'bal, later famous as the Qasr al-Aini school after it moved to Cairo in 1837, was the first hospital to function also as a medical school. Its founder was a certain Dr. Clot from Marseilles, who had arrived in Egypt in 1825. Soon after his arrival he had convinced the Pasha of the need to train Arabic-speaking doctors if an indigenous medical profession was to be established, and students from al-Azhar were recruited to form the nucleus of a new medical corps. Clot set down a blueprint according to which students would be sent to the school for a period of five years, after which they would be given medical ranks and attached to military units under the supervision of European doctors. Infantry and cavalry regiments were each to have one European doctor assisted by two or three Egyptian *hakims*.<sup>45</sup>

These were not the only institutions that the Pasha founded to enhance his fighting capabilities and to improve his chances of winning a possible confrontation with the sultan. Numerous factories were built to turn out what were essentially war products: footwear, fezzes and uniforms for soldiers, sails for ships, guns and cannon. Other industrial institutions included sugar refineries, rice mills, tanneries, and indigo factories. Egypt being deficient in wood and coal, the main motive power for these establishments was supplied by oxen, mules, and other animals, and when these were in short supply by men, women, and children. These people were often

<sup>42</sup> See *Qanun al-filaha*, enacted in 1829, especially articles 18, 20, 27, and 56. The law is published in Filib Jallad (ed.), *Qamus al-idara wa'l-qada*, 4 vols. (Alexandria, 1890–92), III, 1323–29. See also Amin Sami, *Taqwim al-nil wa asr Muhammad 'Ali* (Cairo, 1928), II, 454, letter dated 12 Rajab 1251/November 2, 1835 concerning robbers and highwaymen.

<sup>43</sup> DWQ, Diwan Khidiwi 2/308, 6 Muharram 1251/May 14, 1835.

<sup>44</sup> *Limman* seems to have undergone a transitional meaning now lost, that of corvée or forced labor. See Wilkinson, *An Account*, I, 431.

<sup>45</sup> Clot refused to give his Arabic-speaking students the title "doctor." For a summary of this blueprint see Sami, *Taqwim*, II, 383–84.

dragged from their villages and tattooed on the arm with the factory's name, a practice that was also adopted in the navy to catch deserters. The managers of these establishments were initially mainly Europeans who, like the officers in the army, often lacked skill and experience and who flocked to Egypt seeking employment in the Pasha's expanding service. The lack of efficient motive power, the unskilled, coerced labor, and the inexperienced, often greedy managers hindered the Pasha's "industrial experiment." As a result, many institutions were brought to a standstill, leaving machines and equipment to rust and clog with dust and sand. Rather than closing them down, Muhammad 'Ali decided that the main reason they were not showing a profit was their expensive European managers, and in characteristic manner he set out to replace them with cheaper and more docile personnel. He sent hundreds of young men, "Arabs" as well as "Turks," on educational missions to Europe, mostly to France, to acquire the necessary skills to run these and other institutions.<sup>46</sup>

The considerable cost of these establishments was met mostly by siphoning off profits from the agricultural sector. Specifically, by abolishing the *iltizam* in the early years of his reign and by expanding monopolies to include most commodities produced in the countryside, the Pasha was able to increase his profits and then use them to invest. Most significant in this process was the introduction in 1821 of a new brand of cotton that soon became famous world-wide for its long staple, something that enhanced its competitiveness in European, and especially British, markets owing to its suitability for textile manufacturing. Immediately after its successful introduction, cultivation was expanded to cover huge tracts of land, especially in the Delta, which was practically turned into a huge cotton plantation. Sale of this most lucrative crop was monopolized by the Pasha, who used his considerable profits, which in good years contributed between one-fifth and one-quarter of all revenue, to finance his military and industrial enterprises.<sup>47</sup>

These projects were not made possible only by availability of new sources of income. Throughout this period, drawing from old Ottoman bureaucratic traditions as well as from the centralized French model, a more efficient system of administration was instituted with a clear chain of command, at the top of which was the Pasha himself. Mention has already been made of the abolition of the *iltizam* system whereby chaotic, arbitrary, and frequent tax levies were replaced by a more direct and efficient system of raising taxes

<sup>46</sup> For a biographical list of these students see Umar Tusun, *al-Ba'athat al-'ilmiyya fi ahd Muhammad 'Ali thumma fi ahdayy 'Abbas al-awwal wa Sa'id* (Alexandria, 1934).

<sup>47</sup> Roger Owen, *Cotton and the Egyptian economy, 1820–1914: A Study in Trade and Development* (Oxford, 1969), 40. Cf. Cuno, *The Pasha's Peasants*, 118, who states that profits from all monopolized goods, including cotton, contributed no more than 19–22 percent of total revenue.



from the countryside. A new structure of central as well as provincial government was also established. Accordingly, business in the central government bureaucracy was conducted on two levels, that of deliberative councils (*majalis*) and bureaucratic departments (*diwans*). These administrative bodies, however, had no independent authority; they were set up merely to give recommendations to the Pasha who reserved for himself the right to take final decisions. On the provincial level, the country was divided in 1826 into twenty-four departments (*qisms*), fourteen in Lower Egypt and ten in Upper Egypt. A rigid hierarchical structure was employed to clarify the duties and responsibilities of every official from the *mudir al-mudiriyya* (director of a province) to the *shaykh al-balad* (village headman).<sup>48</sup> Equally important, and in order to have tighter control over the fallahin, a large number of whom were deserting their villages in a desperate attempt to evade the Pasha's seemingly insatiable demands for army, navy, factories, and public works, a tight security system was instituted. This was carried out through new penal codes,<sup>49</sup> by tattooing workers and sailors, by spreading spies (*bassassin*) throughout the countryside and urban centers, and by introducing a sort of identity card (*tazkaras*) that men were required to carry, especially on visits to urban centers.<sup>50</sup>

The effect of the policies implemented in the second phase of Muhammad 'Ali's long career was deeply felt by the population of Egypt, and above all by the peasantry. In addition to the already heavy burden of corvée, higher taxes and the monopolies system, the creation of the new army subjected them to something close to universal conscription, a practice seen as a heavy tax exacted by an oppressive and alien regime. What made matters worse was that in spite of the Pasha's initial order limiting the conscription period to three years, and as a result of nearly unceasing war, these men were seldom released and, in practice, conscription seemed destined to last a lifetime until Ibrahim suggested in 1835 that it be limited to fifteen years.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the combination of conscription and corvée contributed significantly to the breakdown of families; women, like men, paid a high price for the Pasha's ambitious projects. Traditional family production came under severe pressure and many women had to accept employment under the increasingly harsh conditions of the Pasha's factories. A sign of the pressures put on women to provide for their families after the departure of

<sup>48</sup> Rivlin, *The Agricultural Policy*, 77, 87–88. See also *Qanun al-filaha* for an elaboration of these duties.

<sup>49</sup> *Qanun al-filaha* is the prime example of this new kind of legislation. For a comparison with penal legislation in the central lands of the empire see Gabriel Baer, "Tanzimat in Egypt," in Gabriel Baer, *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt* (Chicago, 1969), 109–32.

<sup>50</sup> DWQ, *s/1/48/4/226* on 5 Rabi' al-Awwal 1249/July 23, 1833.

<sup>51</sup> DWQ, *Sham* 31/6 on 7 Muharram 1251/May 5, 1835.

the prime breadwinner was the number of women forced into prostitution, which spread alarmingly in the urban centers in the early 1830s. Worried about the spread of diseases, the authorities banned prostitution from urban centers in 1834.<sup>52</sup>

On the other hand, those fortunate students who were sent to government schools or those even more fortunate whom the Pasha sent to Europe found upon finishing their education that they had improved their lot considerably and joined the Pasha's various educational and medical establishments. Together these doctors, teachers, and engineers would form the nucleus of a professional elite, a new middle class that in due time would replace the 'ulama', *ashraf*, and urban merchants between the masses and their rulers.

The projects undertaken during the second phase of Muhammad 'Ali career allowed him to attract even more members of his family and friends to reside in Egypt and join his expanding service. Specifically the creation of his new professional army offered lucrative employment. Examples abound of such figures who together formed a loyal elite and whose fortunes were closely connected to the Pasha and his policies. Besides his three sons Ibrahim, Tusun, and Isma'il, all of whom had military positions, his grandson 'Abbas (Tusun's son) would be appointed first lieutenant, governor of Cairo, and then inspector general. His nephews Ahmad and Ibrahim Yakan, besides leading military campaigns (the first in Arabia, the second in the Yemen), were also assigned administrative tasks as provincial governors. Another nephew, Muhammad Sharif, held various important positions throughout his uncle's reign: these included governorship of the Sa'id, governorship of Syria (after it had fallen to his uncle's forces), and director of finances. Sons-in-law also occupied important positions: Muharram Bey (married to Tawhida) was appointed head of the navy, Yusuf Kamil (married to Zaynab) was director of the department of civil affairs and of the viceregal department, and Muhammad Bey the *daftardar* (married to Nazli) was appointed treasurer.

These and others not so intimately connected to the Pasha were newcomers to Egypt, spoke Turkish and knew little if any Arabic, and therefore had little connection to their new country. They were dependent on the Pasha for their livelihood and well-being and tried to appease him as best they could in order to enjoy the financial and social privileges that he bestowed on them. For his part, Muhammad 'Ali tried his best to strengthen his ties with these people and prevented them from acquiring land lest they forge links with Egyptian society. Through them he managed not only to create a reliable and trustworthy elite but also to organize the country in an absolute manner that concentrated all power in him and left key decisions in

<sup>52</sup> DWQ, s/2/32/5/72 on 18 Muharram 1250/May 28, 1834.

his hands. Through these tactics "a personally dependent elite helped make one-man rule possible."<sup>53</sup>

### *The final showdown: military expansion, 1829–41*

Having consolidated his grip over Egypt and its inhabitants, increased its productivity, and completed his military preparations, the Pasha was ready for a final confrontation with the sultan, which was needed to transform his hard-won accomplishments into firm legal realities that would secure his tenure as governor of Egypt. For a while, though, Muhammad 'Ali flirted with the idea of using his newly structured military machine to expand westward. Throughout 1829 the French consul-general, Drovetti, suggested to the Pasha the annexation of Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers. This, Drovetti believed (and it seems he was joined by Polignac, the French minister for foreign affairs), would allow the French to take revenge against the dey of Algiers (who had insulted the French consul there by striking him with a fly-whisk). The French were keen on expanding their influence in the Mediterranean but were apprehensive of the possible British reaction; it was thought that a force led by Muhammad 'Ali could avert confrontation with their old European adversary. In return, Drovetti promised the Pasha that France would supply men and ships to compensate for his lost fleet. In the event, however, the Pasha decided the idea was too risky and would distract him from his real objectives. For he clearly saw his proper course of action not in the west but to the east; it was in Syria, not the Barbary states, that Muhammad 'Ali's interests lay.

The reasons for Muhammad 'Ali's interest in Syria are varied, and may be traced to the beginning of his reign. As early as 1810 Muhammad 'Ali showed that he could influence affairs in Syria when he intervened with the Porte on behalf of the *wali* of Damascus, Yusuf Gench Pasha, whom the Porte had dismissed: as a result of his intercession Yusuf was pardoned, although he was not reinstated. In 1812 Muhammad 'Ali confided to the British consul his designs on the Levant. The following years, while his forces were facing difficulties in subduing the Wahhabis, he wrote to the grand vizier that his task would be made much easier if he was given the *wilayas* of Syria in addition to Egypt. In 1821 he again interfered in Syrian affairs when he pleaded with the Porte to pardon 'Abdallah Pasha of Sidon (whom he would later fight and defeat): his mediation led to 'Abdallah Pasha's reinstatement in his pashalik. Throughout the Greek war Muhammad 'Ali asked for Syria as compensation for his costly efforts in helping the sultan.

<sup>53</sup> F. Robert Hunter, *Egypt under the Khedives, 1805–1879: From Household Government to Bureaucracy* (Pittsburgh, 1984), 27.

This deep-seated interest in Syria had various causes. For one thing Syria was rich in wood, which was in short supply in Egypt and badly needed for Muhammad 'Ali's intended navy. Second, although Egypt was more populous than Syria, the Pasha's policies had put enormous strain on the Egyptian population and he was in clear need of an extra source of manpower. He may also have been interested in the tax potential of Syria, in acquiring the customs revenue of its important ports, and in using it as a captive market for his monopolies. Above all, if the sultan were to attempt to dislodge him from Egypt by force, Syria was the likely base from which such force would come; the Pasha needed a buffer area to separate Egypt from the central lands of the Ottoman empire. However, it was the Greek debacle that pushed the Pasha to an act of outright rebellion against the sultan; after exerting all his efforts for the sultan he had been rewarded with a small, rebellious island (Crete) and denied the province he had long coveted and had been requesting for years.

After dismissing the idea of collaborating with the French to capture the Barbary states, the Pasha set his war machine in motion for what was to prove his most daring and best-organized military adventure. Conscription was carried out at a rate that alarmed European observers and set them wondering about the Pasha's true intentions. The *liman* of Alexandria witnessed frenzied activity, and the military factories were geared to maximum production. Even the Friday holiday was canceled to meet the Pasha's targets. The army was scheduled to leave in the summer of 1831 but was delayed until the autumn owing to the appearance of cholera in Cairo; disease took a heavy toll on the civilian population, but Dr. Clot managed to limit its impact on the army. (He was rewarded with the title of bey.) Finally, on November 2, 1831, the crucial hour came. Using the pretext of some 6,000 peasants from the Delta who had fled to 'Abdallah Pasha to evade taxes and the *corvée*, Muhammad 'Ali ordered two expeditions, one by land and the other by sea, to move on Syria. The combined force totaled some 30,000 troops. Ibrahim Pasha landed at Jaffa and soon swept with this massive force through all the major towns of Syria, with the exception of the formidable fortress of Acre, which was besieged and captured only after six months of constant bombardment (May 27, 1832).

The Ottoman forces were no match for Ibrahim's disciplined army, and defeats followed in alarming and embarrassing succession. Ibrahim crossed the Taurus mountains and in July 1832 captured the strategic cities of Tarsus and Adana in southern Anatolia. Alarmed at this rapid and unprecedented advance, the sultan summoned yet another army under the grand vizier, Muhammad Rashid Pasha, a protégé of Khusrav, to save the empire. The two armies met on the plain north of Konya, in the heart of Anatolia, and Ibrahim inflicted a heavy defeat and captured the grand vizier. Finding

the way to Istanbul wide open and with no major force left to oppose him, Ibrahim reached Kutahia, a day's march from the capital.

At this crucial hour Ibrahim Pasha pressed his father for permission to march into the capital of the empire and declare his independence. Muhammad 'Ali, however, was more cautious than his son and instructed him to halt his advance. The Pasha remained ambivalent about the hostilities he had initiated against the sultan, and he feared the reaction of the European powers to the break-up of the empire. In spite of undertaking a blatant act of aggression against the sultan, and even after the spectacular victories that his son had achieved, Muhammad 'Ali was still not willing to be declared a rebel. "Ottoman" in culture and sentiments, a native Turkish speaker, well-versed in the history of the empire and well-informed about events in the capital, the Pasha was at heart an Ottoman in an Ottoman world, a world he was endangering in a grave and unprecedented manner. Even after initiating hostilities against the Ottoman sultan, he could still not contemplate independence. When Halil Pasha, the commander of the Ottoman navy, arrived at Alexandria in January 1833 with peace offers from the sultan, Muhammad 'Ali did not raise the issue of independence. It was Ibrahim who repeatedly urged his father to ask for independence and assume the two crucial attributes of sovereignty: ordering his name to be used in Friday prayers and minting coins with his name on them. His father repeatedly replied that his "Muhammad 'Ali-ness" was enough of a title for him. Indeed, he wrote one letter after another to officials in Istanbul urging them to intercede on his behalf to ask the sultan's forgiveness *and* to be given legal title to the lands he had acquired by force.

The Pasha's hesitancy in negotiations was the result also of his unease about possible European reactions. After the sultan had lost his army and his grand vizier in the battle of Konya, he immediately sought British assistance, and specifically asked for a naval squadron to be sent to defend the capital. The British cabinet, however, was divided and turned down the sultan's plea, much to the chagrin of Palmerston, the foreign secretary. Having been denied British assistance, the sultan turned to the Russians, who were only too eager to send a naval force to Istanbul. They also sent an envoy to Muhammad 'Ali, General Mouarviev, who arrived at Alexandria only a week before Halil and delivered a strong verbal threat that Russia would oppose him by force if he persisted in his advance on Istanbul. The French, for their part, sent him messages of support in his struggle with the sultan. About the position of the one major power that mattered most and which he had tried hardest to appease and to win to his side, Britain, he was unsure. Although the British consul, John Barker, strongly opposed the Pasha's aggression, Muhammad 'Ali suspected that these remonstrations reflected the consul's own opinion and not that of Palmerston.

The result of European disunity, of the difference between Muhammad

'Ali and his son about the next move, and of the Pasha's own ambivalence about his rebellion was an inconclusive settlement that left no party completely satisfied. The "peace of Kutahia," reached in May 1833, retracted the sultan's earlier declaration of Muhammad 'Ali as a rebel and reinstated him in his *wilaya* of Egypt in addition to granting him the Hijaz and Crete. Ibrahim was named as *wali* of the Syrian *wilayas* of Acre, Damascus, Tripoli, and Aleppo. In addition Ibrahim was named as *muhassil*, that is tax-collector, of the province of Adana in southern Anatolia. Thus the Pasha managed to secure from the sultan official recognition of his new expanded power and dominions. But this recognition had to be renewed annually by the sultan, something that left the Pasha subject to the whims of the sultan and the intrigues of his courtiers, chief among whom was Khusrav Pasha, Muhammad 'Ali's old nemesis. In addition, the Pasha was to continue to pay an annual tribute to Istanbul, the size of which proved the subject of acrimonious debate for years to come. As a result, the settlement that ended the first round of direct military confrontation between Muhammad 'Ali and Mahmud was a compromise that left none of the principal parties satisfied: "The Sultan had suffered the vexation of a defeat by a contumacious pasha; the western powers were annoyed at the opening which Ibrahim's victories had offered to the Russians; while the Russians were disappointed at having been unable to entrench themselves more securely at Constantinople."<sup>54</sup>

After a year of military operations the Pasha regrouped and prepared for the second round which, given the inconclusive nature of the Kutahia settlement, was inevitable. First he set out to incorporate his much-coveted province, Syria, into his administration. This he found difficult to do, however, since the Syrians resisted his attempts to disarm them and when Ibrahim tried to conscript them a major revolt broke out that necessitated Muhammad 'Ali's presence to subdue it. Nevertheless, even after managing to quell the rebellion and extend his monopolies, and after he had begun to exploit Syria's considerable natural resources, the Pasha's administration there never managed to cover the cost of occupation.<sup>55</sup>

Back in Egypt, the Pasha issued more orders to raise men from the already exhausted and often underpopulated villages. More schools and factories were opened to meet the army's demands. New batches of students were sent to Europe to acquire the skills needed to run the Pasha's various institutions. One of the most impressive accomplishments of this third phase of the Pasha's reign was in the field of medical reform. Realizing that Egypt faced a shortage of manpower owing in part to a high infant mortality rate in turn caused by, among other things, a high incidence of smallpox among children and a high rate of stillbirths, Clot Bey suggested a wide-ranging

<sup>54</sup> Dodwell, *The Founder*, 122–23.

<sup>55</sup> See DWQ, s/5/47/2/220 on 19 Jumadi al-Thani 1255/August 31, 1839.

vaccination program to eradicate smallpox. In 1832 a school for midwives was opened in Cairo to create a female medical corps that would enable the authorities to vaccinate children at their homes. Moreover, it was realized that traditional midwives, the *dayat*, were not strict in reporting births, and Clot convinced the Pasha that these *dayat* used unscientific, superstitious techniques that led to high rates of stillbirths. In the wake of the heavy cholera epidemic of 1831 a board of health and a quarantine service were established, and following the plague of 1835 free clinics were opened in urban centers which had as one of their functions the conduct of postmortems to identify plague and suspicious cases. In 1837 a new hospital was established in Cairo which, unlike Qasr al-Aini, was exclusively for the civilian population. Named *al-isbitaliya al-mulkiyya*, the civilian hospital, it was located in the rich quarter of Azbakiyya and had a ward for the treatment of women. Most significantly, it also had a pediatric ward that administered smallpox vaccinations. Thousands of children were sent there for vaccination every month by the shaykhs of the quarters (*mashayikh al-harat*). In addition to these impressive accomplishments, the Abu Za'bal school managed in 1837, on the eve of moving to its new location at Qasr al-Aini, to train a total of 420 medical students, many of whom went to France to finish their medical training and came back to assume important positions in the expanding medical service.

Medical reform, therefore, seems to have been one of the most successful of the Pasha's policies and through it the authorities managed to control the devastating plague and cholera epidemics that had ravaged Egypt.<sup>56</sup> Even in this field, though, success was qualified. It was often reported, for example, that owing to time constraints, young doctors were discharged from medical school and sent to their posts, mostly military, before they had finished their proper courses of training. Moreover, while the Qasr al-Aini school was in itself a well-organized medical establishment, there were no preparatory schools founded to supply it with qualified students. Preparatory schools were in fact always founded after the advanced secondary schools, in a manner that reflected the Pasha's characteristic way of reacting to crises rather than following a well-thought-out plan. Nor were these medical institutions spared the usual problems of the Pasha's establishments: bad management, serious bureaucratic complications, constant fighting between Turkish-speaking officials and their European and Arabic-speaking subordinates, and a perpetual fear of the Pasha's wrath.

Educational reforms undertaken in the 1830s, like medical reforms, were directly or indirectly linked to military needs. While Muhammad 'Ali opposed the idea of education for its own sake, he was in desperate need of

<sup>56</sup> For a review of these reforms see LaVerne Kuhnke, *Lives at Risk: Public Health in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley, 1990).

trained personnel to run the various establishments being formed. The preparatory schools opened in Cairo and the provinces were aimed not at spreading primary education among the masses, but at feeding with literate students the secondary schools that had already been established. The textbooks required for these schools were printed at the Bulaq Press, which had been established in 1820. In its early years most of the press's output directly served the army, with more than half the books printed between 1820 and 1840 being military training manuals and compendia of laws.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, the Bulaq Press also published numerous medical and other scientific works, in addition to more general books translated from European languages. Presiding over this impressive work of translation was Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi, who had been sent to France in 1826 as an imam on an educational mission and who later (1836) founded a school for translation and a bureau for translation (in 1841). Connected to these reforms was publication in 1828 of an official gazette, *al-Waqa'i' al-Misriyya*, which, by carrying mainly news of the Pasha's administration and published in Turkish with an Arabic translation, was intended to impress a wider Ottoman readership with the Pasha's accomplishments and the superiority of his administration over that of the sultan in Istanbul.

The schools, like the hospitals, were not without their problems. In addition to the bureaucratic complications that plagued them, students seldom finished the required period of education and were often rushed to secondary institutions unprepared. Young boys were dragged to these new preparatory schools by Turkish-speaking officials in military uniforms who had been sent from Cairo to collect them, often against the wishes of parents who feared that their children were being drafted for the army. In general, little effort was ever made to convince the public, be they parents, village shaykhs, religious scholars, or community leaders, of the logic of the Pasha's new institutions; local opinion and regional sentiments were constantly dismissed as backward, superstitious, and as hampering "development" attempts by the authorities.

The projects put a heavy burden on the Pasha's finances, and by the mid-1830s it had become glaringly obvious that he had extended Egypt beyond its limits. The optimistic years of the preceding decade, which witnessed an all-time peak in revenue of 100m francs, gave way to more difficult times caused by a fall in the price of cotton, collapse in the administrative system, and by widespread opposition to his policies. Combined, these factors led to a 25 percent decline in revenue in 1833.<sup>58</sup> Rather than trim expenses, the Pasha decided to inaugurate yet another massive public works project, huge

<sup>57</sup> Jamal al-Din al-Shayyal, *Tarikh al-tarjama wa'l-haraka al-thaqafiyya fi asr Muhammad 'Ali* (Cairo, 1951), appendices 1, 2.

<sup>58</sup> Douin (ed.), *Boisilecomte*, 125.



barrages at the apex of the Nile Delta to regulate the level of the water in the two branches of the Nile, which it was hoped would increase agricultural productivity in the Delta. Introduction of long-staple cotton and its widespread cultivation in Lower Egypt had necessitated new canals, the *sayfi* canals, deep enough to carry water in the summer months when the Nile was at its lowest levels. These canals had to be periodically cleared of the silt accumulating in them, a process that required more and more laborers at a time when the countryside's manpower had already been stretched beyond its limits. The solution, the Pasha was convinced, lay in accepting the old recommendation of the French engineers under Napoleon, of building a barrage at the point of bifurcation of the Nile north of Cairo to guarantee a steady flow of water regardless of the flood. The Pasha approved the findings of his French chief engineer, Linant, and ordered him to take the required stones from the masonry of the Pyramids, something Linant succeeded in avoiding. In the event, though, work on the project, which started in a confused manner in 1834, was called off two years later, resumed in 1847, and finally finished in 1861.

Rather than ease the Pasha's economic difficulties, this ambitious project added to them and by 1837 his financial situation was critical. Revenue had already reached an all-time low for the period four years earlier, in 1833, and a small increase in the price of cotton in 1834 helped to improve matters only slightly; Egypt was hard hit by the international economic crisis of 1836. Most importantly, though, the heavy conscription and increasing pauperization of the peasants seriously affected the agricultural sector which, between taxes and profits from the sale of monopolized goods, had contributed three-quarters of total revenue. Realizing that his system of controlling agricultural production had failed, a system that had been effectively based on turning the whole country into a huge government farm run by him and his cumbersome bureaucratic administration, Muhammad 'Ali started in 1837 to grant large parcels of land, *ib'adiyyat*, to members of his household and to Turkish-speaking officials in the army and civil administration. This marked a clear reversal of his previous policy of preventing Turkish-speaking immigrants "from becoming proprietors and creating for themselves a personal leverage over the population," as he himself had told a distinguished French visitor.<sup>59</sup> To retain some kind of control over these lands, the Pasha instituted administrative controls whereby the new landlords were forced to supply agricultural products at prices he set down. In other words, while 1837 witnessed an easing of control over land ownership, the same cannot be said regarding monopolies policy. In any case, the situation of the peasants did not improve, since the new landlords were less lenient regarding the collecting of taxes. And even

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

this new policy did not improve the situation: in 1839 taxes were at least one year in arrears, and sometimes two and three years' taxes were owed.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to disaffection caused by the serious structural problems of his various projects, the Pasha and his administration faced deep resentment and opposition from the population at large. Most alarmingly, opposition was noticeable in the army where it often took the dramatic form of young men maiming themselves to avoid conscription. Equally serious was the steady wave of desertion which in the mid-1830s had reached the impressive figure of 60,000 – this in an army that the most exaggerated estimates put at slightly over twice this figure. In spite of all these problems Muhammad 'Ali refused to curtail his ambition; by 1838 he had started to voice to European consuls his desire to be recognized as an independent ruler and to cast off Ottoman authority altogether, something he knew must lead to a new military confrontation with the sultan. This alarmed the European powers: if Muhammad 'Ali were declared independent by Mahmud, then the sultan's empire itself would be gravely endangered. If the sick man of Europe were to be declared dead, an inter-European scramble would ensue for his possessions.

Alarmed at his rebellious *wali's* increased military activity the sultan sent his foreign minister, Mustafa Rashid Pasha, to Britain to seek assistance in the event of a military confrontation with Muhammad 'Ali. Palmerston, once more foreign secretary, refused any military assistance unless the Pasha struck first or declared independence. The Porte's policy, therefore, lay in provoking Ibrahim's forces in Syria and in trying to provoke the Syrian population into outright rebellion against Muhammad 'Ali's rule.

In the event the Porte's policy failed and the Syrians proved too cowed by Ibrahim's iron fist to rise against their occupiers. On June 24, 1839 at Nezib, north of Aleppo, Ibrahim once again showed his military genius by inflicting a heavy defeat on the Ottoman army. Before news of this disaster had reached Istanbul, Mahmud II died, a bitter and defeated man. As if these calamities were not enough, the entire Ottoman fleet now sailed to Alexandria and defected to Muhammad 'Ali. This spectacle resulted from the Pasha's bribing of the Ottoman grand admiral, Ahmad Fawzi, who had feared that if his fleet remained at Istanbul the *sir'askar* (Turkish *serasker*, commander-in-chief of the Ottoman forces), Muhammad Khusrav, would have handed it over to the Russians.

In less than a month, therefore, the Ottomans had lost their army, navy, and sultan, and Muhammad 'Ali had emerged as the most powerful man in the empire. At his disposal was a huge army that had been successful in all its major battles, a combined Ottoman–Egyptian navy that stood a good chance of meeting a possible European threat, and a large number of

<sup>60</sup> Cuno, *The Pasha's Peasants*, 120.

retainers and “followers” in the capital of the empire itself who were ready to press his demands on the new sultan, ‘Abd al-Majid, a boy of sixteen. At the crucial moment, however, when Muhammad ‘Ali awaited an invitation to Istanbul to accept magnanimously “peace offers” from his defeated sultan, he received instead an ultimatum from his bitter old rival, Khusrav Pasha, telling him to cede back the lands he had acquired by force. Khusrav spoke now in his new capacity as grand vizier, a position to which he had elevated himself after snatching the imperial seals during Mahmud’s funeral and appointing himself *sadr azam*.

What saved the young sultan and his empire was not the grand vizier who, as effective as his dramatic gesture proved to be, would not have been able to withstand Muhammad ‘Ali’s formidable pressure, but the unified position that Europe, orchestrated by Britain, for the first time assumed in the confrontation between Muhammad ‘Ali and the Porte. On July 27, 1839 representatives of the five European powers (Britain, France, Russia, Prussia, and Austria) handed the grand vizier a joint note asking him not to reach a final determination of the conflict “without their concurrence.”<sup>61</sup> This gave Khusrav the breathing space he needed, and with a united Europe behind him he pressed Muhammad ‘Ali to return the Ottoman fleet and hand back the lands he had acquired by force.

Coordinating this united European stance in the months to come would be Britain. Palmerston’s hostility to Muhammad ‘Ali had begun six years earlier when the Pasha’s first Syrian war had forced Mahmud II to seek assistance from the Russians, thus giving them a golden opportunity to land their forces in Istanbul. As a further price for protection against Muhammad ‘Ali the Russians had forced the sultan to sign the Hunkar Iskelesi treaty in July 1833, which had a secret clause allowing Russian ships, to the exclusion of all other foreign ships, to enter the Sea of Marmara. When Palmerston had learned of this treaty he was enraged not so much because of the secret clause but because of the stipulation that both signatories would consult before taking steps in foreign affairs. This meant, as far as Palmerston was concerned, that “the Russian Ambassador becomes the chief cabinet advisor to the Sultan.” Palmerston’s suspicion of Russian designs on the Ottoman empire was further fueled by the strong anti-Russian feelings in the British cabinet and among members of parliament and the public at large; above all it was fueled by the acrimoniously Russophobic reports of his ambassador in Istanbul, Ponsonby, who constantly warned against what he feared most and suspected strongly – an alliance between Russia and Muhammad ‘Ali.

Palmerston was also fed regular reports from agents in India, the Persian

<sup>61</sup> For the text of this note and related documents see J. C. Hurewitz (ed.), *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., I, *European Expansion, 1535–1914* (New Haven, 1975), 268ff.

Gulf, and the Yemen, all warning against Muhammad 'Ali's expansion in Arabia. The British were eager to find safer and shorter routes to India now that steam navigation had proved technically and commercially feasible. By the 1830s it was hoped that naval communications with India, both for passengers and for mail, could exploit the new technology and use the Red Sea route. This required coaling stations along the route, but it soon became evident that Muhammad 'Ali had converted the Red Sea into an Egyptian lake. The other route to India considered for possible development in the mid-1830s was via the Euphrates. Here again Palmerston saw his efforts frustrated, this time by Ibrahim's troops, who did their best to thwart attempts to build two British steamships on the river.

Above all it was Muhammad 'Ali's military expansion and repeated confrontations with the sultan that alarmed Palmerston. For these, he believed, brought the Ottoman sultan and Russian czar closer to each other at the expense of the British empire in Asia. Trying to fathom the Pasha's intentions, Palmerston sent an emissary, John Bowring, to Egypt to report on the Pasha's policies and administration. From the report Bowring made after a year in Egypt, Palmerston deduced that it was the Pasha's monopolies policy that had allowed him to siphon off profits from the agricultural sector to build such a powerful military machine.<sup>62</sup> Palmerston was therefore determined to attack these monopolies at the base of Muhammad 'Ali's military might.

An opportunity arose when Mustafa Rashid, the Ottoman foreign minister, visited London in 1838 seeking Palmerston's promise of military assistance against Muhammad 'Ali. Although he failed in this respect, he agreed with Palmerston to strike at the Pasha's monopolies that threatened both empires' interests. The result was the 1838 Balta Liman treaty between the Porte and Britain, banning monopolies throughout the Ottoman empire. This naturally affected a considerable portion of the sultan's own revenues, but the Porte saw this as a fair price to pay to curtail the rebellious *wali's* power. In the following year, 1839, at the height of the crisis between Muhammad 'Ali and the empire, Mustafa Rashid proved once again to be Palmerston's man in Istanbul. By drafting the Gulhane Edict and presenting it to the young sultan 'Abd al-Majid, Rashid showed that he was willing to introduce liberal principles of equality before the law, freedom of religious practice, and educational, legal, and economic reforms. These reforms, Palmerston believed, were necessary if ever the Ottoman empire was to protect its territorial integrity and face Russia's constant attempts to expand southward toward British possessions in India. In short, behind Palmerston's opposition to Muhammad 'Ali was not fear of the nascent power of

<sup>62</sup> Sir John Bowring, "Report on Egypt and Candia," *Parliamentary Papers: Reports from Commissioners*, 21 (1840), 44–45.

Egyptian industry or the closing off of Egypt's markets to British commodities, as some historians have argued.<sup>63</sup> Rather, Palmerston was convinced that the Pasha's policies endangered the Ottoman empire and threw it into the arms of Russia, the only European power that could directly threaten British possessions in Asia.

These were the reasons that informed Palmerston's policy toward Muhammad 'Ali in the crucial years 1839–41. As a result of British pressure, Muhammad 'Ali was forced to comply with the sultan's demands in spite of the latter's military defeat. After a year of tense deadlock over the "Egyptian question," while the Pasha refused to return the fleet or withdraw his troops and, on the other hand, the sultan refused to grant him independence, Palmerston intervened and called a conference in London in July 1840. The "Convention for the Pacification of the Levant" gave the Pasha an ultimatum to withdraw from Syria, Adana, Crete, and Arabia. When the Pasha still refused to comply, a British force landed at Beirut in September, defeated Ibrahim, and forced him to withdraw to Egypt. By December the Pasha had no choice but to accept the conditions of the British-led European coalition. On June 1, 1841 the sultan issued a *firman* naming Muhammad 'Ali governor of Egypt for life and granting his male descendants hereditary rights to office. In addition, the *firman* stipulated that the Pasha reduce his army to 18,000 troops in peacetime and, in a clear reference to the Balta Liman treaty of 1838, that "all the treaties concluded and to be concluded between my Sublime Porte and the friendly Powers shall be completely executed in the Province of Egypt likewise."

With this *firman* the most dramatic chapter in Muhammad 'Ali's career came to an end. Egyptian and French historians have for the most part argued that the *firman* frustrated "Egypt's" attempts to gain independence and prevented her from assuming a leading role in the eastern Mediterranean. The hostile policies of Britain, they argue, were dictated by its anxiety over the Pasha's increasingly independent role and his ambitious economic reforms which were closing off the Egyptian market to British goods by instituting a well-integrated import-substitution program. As attractive as this viewpoint is, it fails to account for the fact that the value of British exports had increased more than tenfold during Muhammad 'Ali's reign,<sup>64</sup> and that British merchants had already been treated in a privileged manner. Their constant complaint was not that their commodities could not be imported into the country, but that they were prevented from dealing directly with producers and consumers and had to conduct their commercial operations through the Pasha. Furthermore, this view ignores the fact that

<sup>63</sup> The most recent example of this attitude is Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt in the reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge, 1984).

<sup>64</sup> Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800–1914* (London, 1981), 85.

the Pasha's "industrial" experiment had fallen to ruins before the Anglo-Ottoman economic agreement of 1838 and not after it. An industrial experiment that was based on no more than seven or eight steam engines could not have been judged by the British government as a serious threat to the mighty industries of Manchester and Liverpool. Above all, though, this view overlooks the fact that Muhammad 'Ali's was not a "national" experiment at development or independence, but a reckless exercise by an ambitious governor of an Ottoman province to expand his control and make sure that his children would enjoy the benefits of his reforms. In this respect the 1841 *firman* does not so much show Britain's determined desire to frustrate "Egypt's" independence and development as it does the crowning success of the Pasha's long career. Through this *firman* Muhammad 'Ali was granted what he had always desired and what he had been fighting so long to achieve, the promise that Egypt and its inhabitants would be given to him and his descendants to govern.

### *Retrenchment and reprieve, 1841–48*

The last period of the Pasha's reign saw him adjusting to the new political situation as defined in the 1841 *firman* and maximizing his profits from it. Having returned Syria, Crete, and Arabia to the sultan, and at the same time feeling finally secure in his position as *wali* after recognition as such by the European powers, he set out to improve his relations with the sultan. For his part, although the governorship of Egypt was no longer his to give to any of his pashas and retainers, the sultan realized that legally Egypt was still within the empire's fold. Above all, 'Abd al-Majid was pleased that the threat of dismemberment had been averted and he was keen to readmit Muhammad 'Ali into his imperial orbit. He bestowed numerous honors on his previous enemy and even invited him to Istanbul in 1846 to receive new titles and decorations.

Also improving were Muhammad 'Ali's relations with Britain. Having contained Muhammad 'Ali within Egypt the British government was interested in using the noticeable improvement in security that the Pasha's policies had effected in Egypt to improve its own communications with India. Although a rail link between Cairo and Suez was rejected, the Pasha allowed Britain to use the overland route from Alexandria to Suez. His dealings with European merchants were often antagonistic because of his desperate attempt to retain control over the countryside and their desire to bypass him altogether and deal directly with the Egyptian population.

During the last stage of his career Muhammad 'Ali's centralizing policies continued to be undermined. As we have seen, his "industrial" experiment had come to a virtual standstill in the mid-1830s even before the confrontation with Europe and the sultan in 1839. Likewise, his monopolies policy

was gradually abandoned when he started granting large tracts of land to members of his family and the elite in 1837–38. After 1841 this tendency accelerated and he realized that he had to relinquish direct control over the production process to placate the rising Turkish-speaking elite he had transplanted to Egypt. Many saw no point in complying with the old Pasha's bureaucratic directives and became convinced that he had no means of stopping them from expropriating the agricultural surplus for their own benefit rather than channeling it to his coffers.

If the last period of the Pasha's rule witnessed a weakening of his control over the countryside and the firmer entrenchment of the Turkish-speaking elite, it also saw the rising middle classes secure for themselves a more stable position in Egyptian society. After demobilization of the army in 1841 hundreds, if not thousands, of senior and middle-ranking officers returned to Egypt and started seeking employment in the Pasha's civilian administration. Having been in close contact with their Arabic-speaking subordinates, most of them peasants from various parts of Egypt, they had come to understand local customs and realized that they had to acquire Arabic if they intended to stay in Egypt. Furthermore, the hundreds of doctors, engineers, and other professionals who had been educated in the Pasha's schools also carved out places for themselves, equipped as they were with nothing more than the educational training they had acquired. These, like demobilized officers, now sought employment in the civilian bureaucracy before being forced in a generation's time into private business. In this respect the Sudan, which had been granted to Muhammad 'Ali in the 1841 *firman*, offered some kind of employment opportunity, although service in Egypt proper was preferred.

As far as common Egyptians were concerned, the period 1841–48 saw recuperation from the heavy burden of Muhammad 'Ali's imperial projects. As such, this period properly belongs to what has been termed the "Middle decades of the nineteenth century,"<sup>65</sup> a period that also includes the reigns of 'Abbas (1849–54) and Sa'id (1854–63). These "middle decades" witnessed less aggressive taxation and fewer and lighter corvée burdens on the peasants. Although the new landlords set out to exploit peasants by forcing them to perform corvée labor on their *ib'adiyyat*, these corvée levies, by their very nature, were performed on the same plots of land and, unlike Muhammad 'Ali's earlier ones, seldom dispatched peasants to distant areas. The peasants also benefited from abolition of monopolies, although they soon found themselves vulnerable to fluctuations of the international market and the caprices of foreign merchants, money-lenders, and bankers. Above all, however, the peasants welcomed the end of conscription with no small degree of joy, and on returning from the different war fronts they rejoined

<sup>65</sup> Ehud Toledano, *State and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge, 1990).

their long-lost families and reclaimed the lands they had been forced to abandon. This wrought havoc in the system of landholding and necessitated a new land law in 1847, one of whose main functions was to deal with this confusing situation.

### *Muhammad 'Ali's legacy*

Muhammad 'Ali's long reign had an enormous impact on Egypt, on its position within the Ottoman empire, and its relations with Europe. The Pasha's policies emphasized to the British the importance of Egypt's position for their communications with India; increasing awareness of Egypt's strategic position contributed in no small degree to the British decision in 1882 to interfere militarily in Egypt, ushering in a period of occupation that lasted for seventy years.

Muhammad 'Ali's policies radically altered Egypt's position as a province of the Ottoman empire. The 1841 *firman* changed Egypt's legal and official relations with the Sublime Porte, but change came too on the economic and cultural fronts. The Pasha's reign witnessed developments that tied Egypt more firmly to the European world at the expense of its former connections with the Ottoman empire. The cultivation of cotton on a large scale effectively turned the Delta into a huge plantation that produced a crop predominantly destined for European markets. In this manner the Egyptian cultivator became well entrenched in the world market and found himself susceptible as never before to forces of the international economy. The monopolies that the Pasha instituted, furthermore, undermined the traditional urban merchants whose trade in coffee and spices had been primarily conducted within the Ottoman empire or with lands farther to the east. At the end of the Pasha's reign Europe, mainly Britain and France, were Egypt's main trading partners.

The configuration of Egypt's social structure was also completely changed during the Pasha's reign. Gone for good was the power of the Mamluk warlords who had controlled Egypt for centuries, and in their place were members of Muhammad 'Ali's family and numerous retainers. These hundreds and thousands of Turkish-speaking officials who flocked with their families to serve in his civilian and military bureaucracies formed a new ingredient in Egyptian society. After having been granted land in the mid-1830s they became permanent residents, started to learn Arabic and use it as their daily language, intermarried with Egyptians, and built palaces in Cairo and Alexandria rather than in Istanbul and Izmir. These formed the new landed aristocracy of Egypt, which was to play an increasingly important role in the decades to come. In opposition to this Ottoman-oriented elite, the hundreds of students whom the Pasha sent to Europe had a significant impact in reorienting Egyptian culture from the Ottoman empire with its



Islamic heritage to a more European, mostly French, model. The new cultural elite, backed, as it were, by the entrenched linkage of the Egyptian economy to the European market, was to decide Egypt's future orientation and lay the groundwork for a later cultural movement that would insist that Egypt had a Mediterranean identity, rather than an Oriental, Ottoman one.

Muhammad 'Ali's most lasting legacy, however, proved to be creation of a new kind of state in Egypt, a state that monopolized coercive power like contemporary European states and used this monopoly to spread Cairo's influence over distant areas of Egypt in an effective and permanent manner. Rather than limiting itself to traditional government duties of raising taxes, defending external borders against foreign encroachment, and keeping a certain degree of internal tranquillity, Muhammad 'Ali's government navigated waters seldom charted by any government before the nineteenth century. Chief among these tasks were new medical and educational concerns. Opening government schools, printing new kinds of books on a large scale, issuing a semi-regular newspaper, vaccinating young children, performing medical checkups on pupils, conducting regular cadasters and censuses, and above all conscripting thousands of young men into the Pasha's army – all these new policies altered the nature of the Egyptian state and changed people's relations with it.

The effect of the Pasha's policies, therefore, whether or not beneficial in the long term, were not always appreciated by average Egyptians, those masses of peasants and poor town dwellers along the Nile. The policies of conscription, *corvée*, increased taxation, monopolies, as well as the numerous "factories" and workshops into which they were pressed, made their lives miserable. They came to detest the authority of the Pasha and resist his regime as oppressive, intolerant, and inhumane. They realized that they had no place in the Pasha's dreams and aspirations except as a source of cheap and docile labor. In this manner Muhammad 'Ali was truly the founder of modern Egypt, an Egypt in which the Egyptians found themselves silenced, exiled, punished, and robbed of the fruits of their labor, an Egypt to be ruled as he had wished by his descendants for a hundred years after his death.